

BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETING

Thursday, April 16, 2026

Ausable Bayfield Conservation Authority Boardroom
Morrison Dam Conservation Area

DIRECTORS PRESENT

Ray Chartrand, Adrian Cornelissen, Steve Herold, Jaden Hodgins (Via Zoom), Dave Jewitt, Wayne Shipley, Marissa Vaughan

DIRECTORS ABSENT

Joey Groot, Dave Marsh

STAFF PRESENT

Andrew Bicknell, Tina Crown, Millie Ghorbankhani, Abbie Gutteridge, Davin Heinbuck, Brian Horner, Jaden Schoelier, Nathan Schoelier, Mari Veliz

OTHERS PRESENT

Adam Skillen, *Skillen Investment Management*

CALL TO ORDER

Chair Ray Chartrand called the meeting to order at 10:00 a.m., welcomed everyone in attendance, and read the Land Acknowledgement Statement.

ADOPTION OF AGENDA

MOTION #BD 32/26

**Moved Wayne Shipley
Seconded by Dave Jewitt**

“RESOLVED, THAT the agenda for the April 16, 2026, Board of Directors Meeting be approved.”

Carried.

DISCLOSURE OF PECUNIARY INTEREST

There were no disclosures of pecuniary interest at this meeting or from the previous meeting.

DISCLOSURE OF INTENTION TO RECORD

None.

ADOPTION OF MINUTES**MOTION #BD 33/26****Moved by Adrian Cornelissen****Seconded by Dave Jewitt**

“RESOLVED, THAT the minutes of the Board of Directors meeting held on March 26, 2026, and the motions therein be approved as circulated.”

Carried.

BUSINESS OUT OF THE MINUTESRegional Consolidation of Conservation Authorities – Update and ERO Decision

Davin Heinbuck, General Manager/Secretary-Treasurer, provided an update regarding the regional consolidation of conservation authorities in Ontario. He noted that, on March 10, 2026, a decision was made regarding ERO 025-1257, following a 45 day posting. Over 5,600 submissions were received through the ERO posting, and in total there were more than 14,000 comments, resolutions, etc. submitted to the Province. The Province made the decision to consolidate Ontario’s 36 conservation authorities (CAs) into nine regional CAs, up from the original proposed seven regional CAs. Guiding principles include retaining local expertise, maintaining watershed-based boundaries and geographic alignment, reduced administrative duplication and the continuity of services.

The Ausable Bayfield Conservation Authority (ABCA), will be one of six CAs included in the Lake Huron Region CA. The other five include Maitland Valley CA, Saugeen Valley CA, Grey Sauble CA, Nottawasaga Valley CA and Lake Simcoe CA. Board representation for the region will come from upper and single-tier municipalities.

Some key points from the March 10 decision include that the Ontario Provincial Conservation Agency (OPCA) establish transition committees for each region, with representation from each predecessor CA, and appoint Project Executives who will chair these committees, and will also serve as the first CAO of the region to ensure stability and continuity in leadership. The transition committees will develop transition plans for each region. A Board of Directors will be selected by participating municipalities for each region. There will be some guardrails established to prevent extraordinary financial, asset or employment decisions to help mitigate risk during the transition phase. In addition, there will be at least one or more Watershed Councils established for each region to ensure local priorities are identified and considered by the region.

The passing of legislation for these changes is expected in the next month, and CAs will have 90 days to appoint members to the transition committee. In early 2027, the nine regions will be formed through statutory amalgamation, and transition plans will be implemented. However, during this

time of change, ABCA staff will continue with all programs and services, and continue to work collaboratively with our local municipalities and community partners.

PRESENTATION

Adam Skillen, *Skillen Investment Management*, provided an update on ABCA investments. He noted that as per ABCA Board direction, they have been rotating GICs and equities back to their original target percentages. He noted that markets took a hit in March, but have come back up in April. In 2025, the portfolio increased by 7.8%, and that, to date, it is in a good position for 2026.

PROGRAM REPORTS

1. (a) Development Review

Jaden Schoelier, Water & Planning Technician, presented the Development Review report pursuant to Ontario Regulation 41/24 *Prohibited Activities, Exemptions and Permits*. Through the application process, proposed developments within regulated areas are protected from flooding and erosion hazards. Staff granted permission for 6 *Applications for Permission* and 7 *Minor Works Applications*.

(b) Violation/Appeals Update

Andrew Bicknell, Water and Planning Manager, did not have an update regarding ongoing violations.

MOTION #BD 34/26

**Moved by Steve Herold
Seconded by Marissa Vaughan**

“RESOLVED, THAT the Board of Directors affirm the approval of applications as presented in Program Report # 1 – a) Development Review, and receive the verbal Violations and Appeals update as presented.”

Carried.

2. Draft Annual Pay Grid Adjustment Policy

Davin Heinbuck reminded Directors that at the November 20, 2025 Board of Directors meeting, direction was given to develop a policy that ties ABCA’s pay grid adjustment to the Consumer Price Index (CPI). During the annual budget preparation, the standard practice for determining this adjustment had been to take an average of what ABCA’s municipal partners were adjusting for their employees, which generally reflected the CPI. This new policy notes that using a three-month average (May-July) would be desirable, as there can be significant month-to-month fluctuation. At no time, would the CPI result in a negative adjustment of the pay grid.

MOTION #BD 35/26

**Moved by Marissa Vaughan
Seconded by Wayne Shipley**

“RESOLVED, THAT the Ausable Bayfield Conservation Authority Board of Directors approves the attached policy for ABCA’s annual Pay Grid Adjustment, and

“FURTHER, THAT the annual pay Grid Adjustment Policy be used for budget preparations and approvals effective this date, April 16, 2026.”

Carried.

3. Ausable River Cut Conservation Area Master Plan (2026-2036)

Nathan Schoelier, Stewardship, Conservation Lands and Education Manager, presented the final draft of the Ausable River Cut Conservation Area Master Plan to the Board of Directors. An earlier draft was presented to the Board, and since that time there has been public engagement for feedback, and any changes reflect that feedback. Upon approval, it will be available on the ABCA’s website.

MOTION #BD 36/26

**Moved by Wayne Shipley
Seconded by Jaden Hodgins**

“RESOLVED, THAT Ausable Bayfield Conservation Authority Board of Directors approves the Ausable River Cut Conservation Area Master Plan (2026-2036).”

Carried.

4. 1st Quarter Profit and Loss Statement

Tina Crown, Financial Services Coordinator, presented the 1st quarter profit and loss statement for the ABCA. In general, she noted that grant funding was coming through as expected, and that municipal levy billing would be upcoming in the 2nd quarter. She did note an increase in purchased services, which is due to consultation for the new hydrology model.

MOTION #BD 37/26

**Moved by Wayne Shipley
Seconded by Jaden Hodgins**

“RESOLVED, THAT the Ausable Bayfield Conservation Authority Board of Directors receive the 1st Quarter Profit and Loss Statement as presented.”

Carried.

COMMITTEE REPORTS

None.

CORRESPONDENCE

None.

NEW BUSINESS

1. Davin Heinbuck attended a briefing from the Province of Ontario and OPCA, which provided a little more information regarding the consolidation of conservation authorities. From that briefing it was noted that there will be several phases to the consolidation. Following the passing of Bill 97, which is expected soon, Phase 2 will begin, which will be a transition phase. This will last until early 2027, when amalgamation takes place (February 1, 2027), and will bring in Phase 3 – Transformation. The last phase could last two or more years.

Davin noted that some of the changes that came out of the ERO posting were the addition of Watershed Councils to retain local input, as well as some small changes to the boundaries of the new regions (now creating nine instead of seven). He noted that the initial amalgamation will be a change in name, meaning that all existing agreements, etc. will remain in place and now be with the new conservation authority region, and all employees will simply transfer over to the new entity. Davin suggested that if Bill 97 receives Royal Assent soon, then ABCA should be prepared to appoint two members to the Transition committee at the next Board of Directors meeting. In total, there will be at least 12 members on the transition committee (two from each predecessor CA), with the potential of an additional appointment from the OPCA. He noted that there will be an upcoming inventory of programs, to ensure that nothing gets overlooked in the transition.

Also of note, the 2027 budget for each predecessor CA will be developed by that CA with guidance from the OPCA, and should be approved before the end of the year; however, it may be wise to have it approved prior to upcoming municipal elections in October. Levies will be issued to the current member municipalities. Regarding governance, it has been suggested that each single and upper tier municipality will have a representative on the regional Board. The Province has provided some guidance and rules around appointment. It was noted that the Transition Committees will need to dedicate time and resources to engaging the counties, as they have traditionally had less dealing with conservation authorities. Davin also noted that Watershed Councils should be an avenue by which local interests can still be represented. It has been recommended that each predecessor CA have a Watershed Council.

MOTION #BD 38/26

**Moved by Wayne Shipley
Seconded by Marissa Vaughan**

“RESOLVED, THAT the Ausable Bayfield Conservation Authority Board of Directors receive the update on the Provincial Briefing as presented.”

Carried.

COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE

None.

ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned by Wayne Shipley at 11:53 a.m.

Ray Chartrand
Chair

Abigail Gutteridge
Secretary

*Copies of program reports are available upon request.
Contact Abigail Gutteridge, Corporate Services Coordinator*

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